

4 The Integrity of Leaders

Aim:

We can have the appearance of being 'whole' on the outside but perhaps things are very different on the inside. This workshop aims to help us look at how we may be persons of integrity – 'being whole' on the inside and outside by discovering that as Christ's people we are called to live with him at the centre

ACTIVITIES:

Seated in circle, invite each person to introduce her/himself, (even if everyone knows everyone else!) and to name a plant that describes them! Each person is free to say why they chose that particular plant.

1. Use a Flip Chart to list the words and phrases that come to mind when you think of "integrity". (The word actually comes from the Latin 'integer' meaning "whole" and so describes a state of being whole.)

2. Remember the last study on "Feel the fear and do it anyway"? Now here is a chance to practice it together!! Take about 10 minutes to make a simple mask which depicts how you think the world sees you, bearing in mind the different people with whom you interact.

Take a few minutes to describe to a partner what you have made. Then in another few minutes write on the other side of the sheet what you are glad others cannot see. (THIS IS YOUR REFLECTION & WILL NOT BE SHOWN TO ANYONE!)

When you have finished, sit quietly and reflect on what you have drawn / written on both sides of your mask. Consider is there a sense of integrity concerning your life (do both sides 'match up'?)

SONG

"Take my life",
"Jesus, be the centre" or another song that helps focus on Christ at the centre of our lives.

BIBLE WORK:

(Optional – the group might list ways in which people try to find happiness in our culture today.F/C)

Psalm 1: 1- 6 [three readers could read verses: a) 1-3; b) 4-5; c) 6]

The Psalm is a guide which describes what is needed to be 'blessed' (happy many times over)

In one or more groups, use the following questions as discussion starters.

Different groups might start with a different cluster of questions.

CLUSTER A

1. What characterises a person who is 'blessed'? (v 1-3)

i.....ii.....iii.....

iv.....v.....vi.....

2. Such a person is compared to a tree. Imagine the picture described and write down the qualities or usefulness of such a tree and what this figure of speech suggests to you.

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3. Chaff (v.4) is hollow with no inner substance. The life-giving kernel is gone. Chaff drifts away on the wind.

What might be "chaff" in our lives?

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CLUSTER B

4. What do you understand the 'law of the Lord' to be? (v.2)

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5. How might it be possible to meditate on it for so long? (v2)

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6. What difference might this make in our daily living?

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CLUSTER C

7. What do you think that those who are not following God understand by 'prosper's'? (v3 See also Genesis 39;3)

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8. What do you think the Christian understanding might be? (Can you relate this to the tree metaphor?).

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9. Does the Psalm have anything to say about the qualities of a friendship; the freedom of choice; or the influence we have on others?

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Comment:

Living in right relationship and open communication with God, as Jesus did, brings our lives to wholeness. (lived with integrity from the inside out).

We are blessed (happy many times over) when our lives are in balance / when we are not trying to conceal parts of ourselves from God, from others and from self, and when we are living by God's standards.

Very often the behaviours, that we feel unhappy about, come from a sense of "a hole in the soul". We are different inside than out **and Christ is not in the centre of our lives.**

This chapter Psalm 1 is the introduction to a whole book which contains a clear, descriptive record of rage, sorrow, despair and joy. Psalms reveal the open, honest and not always pretty intensity of human emotion! Each Psalmist knew that s/he needed to 'be real' with the God, who knows us in the deepest parts of our lives. As the writers share all of their life experiences with God, and seek to listen to God ('meditating on the on the law of the Lord') He ministers to their deepest needs and hurts.

Prayer:

As a group, prepare your closing prayer by considering the qualities that could create a better balance between your outer and inner selves. (e.g. peace, humour, trust). A group member writes these words as they are suggested within a face-shape on the flipchart.

Prayer idea

Loving Lord Jesus, you lived with perfect integrity – that there was always a match between what You were experiencing and what You were expressing.

In this time of quietness, as we look at both sides of our masks, we are aware that there are times when we do not live in such integrity. We know that we have done those things that we ought not to have done and left undone those things that we ought to have done.

Please forgive us where we have fallen short of the integrity You desire in our lives.

We bring to You our desire for these qualities in our lives, (LEADER READS THROUGH WORDS ON FLIPCHART)

We know that You have promised 'ask and you shall receive.' Grant that we will grow in lives that are pleasing to You. Help us to be kind and encouraging friends; help us to make friends with ourselves and help us to keep in intimate relationship with you, so that we may live lives of integrity from the inside out.

We ask this in Your name, for You alone are the Source of all that is truly desirable and that You may be glorified.

Amen.

Take away – Thoughts for Reflection at home afterwards

This chapter conveys that we have a choice in life 'God's way or the world's way' – each has different results!

Think about how you lead yourself. Are you friends with yourself - are you helping/ encouraging yourself to make daily (moment by moment!) choices to live God's way?

The Psalms are an incredible record of the depth and diversity of human emotion, expressed to God. What emotions do you find easiest and which are most difficult, to acknowledge to yourself? offer to God? share with others?

Do you find that you pray with more intensity – or very little – when you are happy/ angry/ grieving/ fearful/ doubting?

Perhaps you might like to write your own Psalm to God expressing how you are feeling or what you are experiencing in your life at the moment. Remember, God already knows our emotions and wants us to share all of ourselves with Him, as the psalmist did.

In writing a psalm, try setting it out by putting down 3 joys, 3 pains and 3 questions.

Am I really 'happy many times over' (delighted with life) or are there areas of my life that show signs of spiritual, ethical or moral compromise?

When we are open and honest with God, living our whole lives without denying part of who we are (i.e. living in integrity) begins to become a reality.

Think of at least two friends who encourage you to live a life of integrity. Thank God for them and perhaps send a note of appreciation to these friends.

Suggested reading to prepare this Bible study: 'Living Beyond the Daily Grind' Book 1
Charles Swindoll Word Publishing, Milton Keynes, 1988

P.S. Don't forget to do homework for next week!